

1997 SESSION

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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 465

Offered January 15, 1997

Requesting that the Virginia State Crime Commission study the staffing needs and levels within the Department of Corrections, and reevaluate the retirement benefits of probation and parole officers.

Patrons—Woodrum, Almand, Cunningham, Davies, Guest and Moore; Senators: Howell, Lucas, Stolle and Waddell

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the increased prison population has forced the utilization of mandated overtime by correctional officers to meet additional security demands of the system; and

WHEREAS, with the increasing number of inmates, correctional institution security staff face greater challenges, increased job stress, and heightened personal safety risks; and

WHEREAS, recent legislative changes will further increase the demand for prison beds and corrections staff; and

WHEREAS, safety concerns regarding staffing levels are hampering the recruitment and retention efforts of the Department of Corrections; and

WHEREAS, a high turnover rate represents a substantial drain of state resources; and

WHEREAS, retention of trained correctional staff is critical to public safety; and

WHEREAS, probation and parole officers face almost daily contact with ex-offenders with histories of violence; and

WHEREAS, increasing caseloads make it increasingly difficult for probation and parole officers to adequately serve their clients; and

WHEREAS, ongoing changes in job duties and responsibilities for probation and parole officers, including a greater amount of field work in the offenders' communities, result in increased personal safety risks for these officers; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State Crime Commission, in a study on correctional officer/probation-parole officer issues, recommended that a study be conducted to reevaluate retirement benefits for probation and parole officers and to study staffing needs, particularly those of correctional institution security and probation and parole staff; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia State Crime Commission be directed to study the staffing levels of the Department of Corrections, particularly institutional security staff and probation and parole officers, and to reevaluate the retirement benefits of probation and parole officers.

The Crime Commission shall receive technical assistance from the appropriate criminal justice agencies, particularly the Department of Corrections, as well as from the staffs of the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee.

The Crime Commission shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1998 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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